Modern Glass

MUSEUM NEWS • THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART • SPRING 1969

MODERN GLASS

The glass collections of The Toledo Museum of Art are among the most important in the world. The eminence of these collections may be attributed to the great range of periods represented. Edward Drummond Libbey, founder of the Museum, was instrumental in forming the outstanding collection of ancient glass during his travels to Europe and the Near East.

The quality of these ancient examples of the glassworker's art set the standard for the rest of the collection and the Museum has continued to acquire rare and beautiful glass representing all periods of history. Many of the important 20th century examples were presented to the Museum by generous Toledo families. Fine pieces of glass dating from 1900 to the present were given by Mr. and Mrs. C. Justus Wilcox, Mr. and Mrs. William E. Levis, Mrs. Charles Megowen and many others. Other key pieces of 20th century glass came to the Museum through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh J. Smith, Jr. of Scarsdale, New York.

The Museum is grateful for these gifts, for they have provided the collection with prized objects which might otherwise have been impossible to acquire. It is the hope of the Museum that this generous tradition will continue so that the collection of glass may continue to expand.

This publication surveys glass of the 20th century and illustrates the artistic trends of nearly seven decades with representative examples. The pieces illustrated are objects of aesthetic merit characteristic of the innovative spirit of the 20th century. Many technological and aesthetic advances make this century's glass as beautiful as any produced.

Last year the Museum marked the sesquicentennial of the Libbey Glass Company with an important exhibition of its glass. Since the catalogue for that exhibition dealt extensively with the Libbey firm, this publication emphasizes glass produced on an international scope by other important designers, craftsmen, and manufacturers.

The rare and fragile objects illustrated in the succeeding pages are a relevant and accurate reflection of the important artistic trends of our times.

Otto Wittmann,
Director

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GLASS OF THE 20th CENTURY

It is widely known and accepted that paintings reflect and document the artistic developments of a given period. However, it is frequently an unemphasized fact that the decorative arts are a valid and sometimes intimate statement about these same trends. Furniture, metalwork, and glass of a period are an accurate reflection of the time in which they were produced. From the study of these "decorative arts," the student, collector, and scholar can learn much about an historical period. Thus, the glass produced from 1900 to the present day has much to tell the observer about the technological and artistic developments of these decades. As a major aspect of the decorative arts, glass in the 20th century has accurately documented the aesthetic trends of the times.

The early years of the 20th century were marked by the development of an international Art Nouveau style, characterized by sinuous line, floral and vegetable motifs, and soft evanescent colors. The glass of this style was elegant of outline with pale or iridescent surfaces. The most noted American maker of glass in this style was Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933), but France also produced a number of outstanding craftsmen. The Daum brothers of Nancy were among the first artists to work in the Art Nouveau idiom, and Emile Gallé (1846-1904) is generally associated with French glass of the period. Such work was characterized by elaborate cameo techniques, the result of concentrated scientific study. The light, elegant quality of this Art Nouveau glass was in direct contrast to the heavy opulence of contemporaneous cut glass. The Art Nouveau style was dominant from 1895 until 1915, although its waning influence continued through the mid-1920's.

The 1920's reacted sharply to many of the conventions and tastes established by the preceding decades. Dress and social customs changed radically, as did taste in glass. Ponderous and elaborately decorated cut glass, which had been popular from 1890, fell from favor, together with the pale and graceful Art Nouveau types. The new taste demanded chaste outline and dramatic effects of contrast. Much of this glass was clear and cased (or overlaid) in red, black, blue, or green. This colored surface was then cut in simple geometric patterns to reveal the clear glass beneath. Designers during this period also experimented with elegant surface and color effects.

The decade of the 1930's was characterized by glass of an even more formal style, with elaborate and subtle surfaces. Older techniques of cutting and copper wheel engraving were frequently employed, but they were put to new, more contemporary effects. The stylization of the preceding decade continued, and many pieces bore handsome decoration in the form of fawns, gazelles, and antelopes. Frederick Carder (1863-1963) of the Steuben Glass works and A. Douglas Nash (1885-1940) of the Libbey Glass Company were outstanding designers, while beautiful pieces were produced in Europe by the noted craftsmen of the Orrefors firm in Sweden and the Leerdam works of Holland.

Glass of the 1940's once more reacted against the intricate surfaces and formality to produce a style characterized by heavy metal of great brilliance. Designs tended to emphasize this brilliance by being of simple shape; decoration was sparse and was used only when it complemented the glass itself. Technological advances in this period permitted the manufacture of a glass whose ingredients were chemically pure and perfectly combined mechanically.

By the opening years of the 1950's, glass had begun to follow the trend to abstraction which

marked much painting and sculpture in the previous decade. Coupled with experiments in form was an interest in bright colors, whose function was to enhance the shapes. Glass craftsmen all over the world became interested in beautiful surface texture and created this by the use of air bubbles, iridescence and working the actual surface into prunts and raised areas. The formality of twenty years earlier and the completely chaste designs of the previous decade were abandoned in favour of glass as a sculptural medium. A further characteristic of these designs of the 1950's was that the objects themselves took on a distinctly international character.

The 1960's have expanded and developed these stylistic traits, and this movement has been greatly augmented by the experimentation and work of a group of dedicated pioneers. A leader in the trend was The Toledo Museum of Art, which in 1962 sponsored a series of glass-blowing seminars. These seminars brought together such glass craftsmen as Harvey K. Littleton and Dominick Labino. The result of these meetings was a new interest in glass as a distinct aesthetic medium. The seminars proved that glass could be blown outside a factory and so opened the way for a complete range of experimentation with glass.

The Toledo movement has had an international effect and is important in reversing the traditional pattern of a studio designer creating sketches for the glassworker to reproduce. Today, the designer and craftsman are one. Color and form are of prime interest, and many older decorative techniques have been dropped in favor of emphasizing the intrinsic properties of the medium. Glass has emerged as a sculptural as well as a functional medium, and this is the great contribution of the Sixties.

New aesthetic trends will continue to influence the design and function of glass, but, as in the past, these trends will be reflected closely in this important aspect of the decorative arts. The exciting and innovative production of the twentieth century will continue to develop and to produce in the years to come, objects as beautiful as those on the succeeding pages.

John W. Keefe
Assistant Curator

COVER: *L. to R., Vase by Paolo Venini, Vase by Erwin Eisch, Ariel Vase by Orrefors Glassworks, Bowl by Jean Sala, "Objects in Space" by Dominick Labino, Goblet by Louis Comfort Tiffany.*

All of the pieces pictured on the cover appear in the pages of this publication.

EMILE GALLÉ (1846-1904), French.
VASE. Iridescent acid-finished body with cameo cut lavender iris. About 1900.
Ht. 14½ inches; diameter at lip 5 inches. Signed Gallé on side.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh J. Smith, Jr. 51.360.

Gallé was the dominant figure in the production of French art nouveau glass. His name is generally associated with the elaborately shaded pieces created by cameo-cutting; this expensive technique involved cutting away colored outer layers of glass which revealed a contrasting color. The great theme of Gallé was "nature in glass," and for their effect his pieces usually employed floral, insect, and fish motifs.

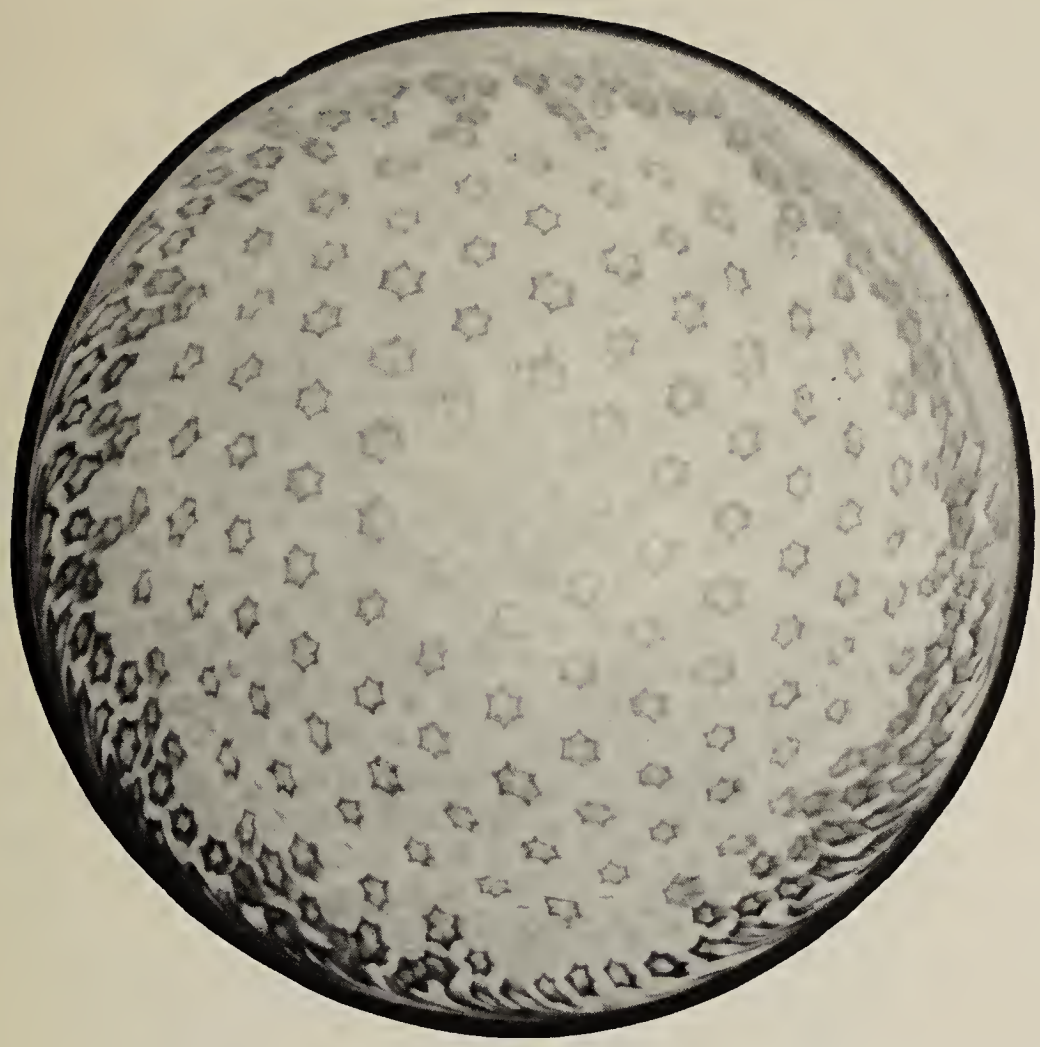
This vase is noteworthy for its large size, chaste form, and rich color, in which the deep lavender iris is projected upon the body of softly glowing amber glass.

Footnote: In those cases where an individual was responsible for design, actual glassworking, and decoration, his name appears first in this issue. When an individual was responsible for design only, his name is listed under that of the company by which he was employed.

LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY (1848-1933), American.
GOBLET. Cased white, iridescent orange, and clear with threaded and combed green leaves. Between 1900-1905.
Ht. 12 inches. Signed L.C.T. on base.
Gift of Mrs. Edmund T. Collins. 62.73.

Louis Comfort Tiffany was the American leader of the art nouveau style. His career began as a successful interior designer, generally recognized as a pioneer in conceiving interior spaces as an integrated unit instead of a confusion of parts. Later, however, he concentrated on the production of the fine glass which is so admired today. The Tiffany furnaces were located at Corona, Long Island.

Iridescent glass had been made popular by the discovery in the 1850's of ancient examples from Pompeii and Rome. By constant experimentation with iridescence, Tiffany was able to produce a vast range of color and texture. He was a meticulous, if eclectic, scholar able to draw on ancient Arabic, Persian and Oriental examples for the form and decoration of his sumptuous glass.



FREDERICK CARDER (1863-1963), American.
PLATE. Millefiori technique in blue and yellow, with amethyst rim. About 1910.
Diameter 8 3/8 inches. Signed Fredrk. Carder, incised on surface.
Gift of Will F. Broer. 49.25.

The millefiori or "thousand flowers" technique has been used in glass design since the Roman civilization. Since Frederick Carder was trained in the classical styles of the antique world, it was not surprising that he revived this ancient technique at the Steuben Glassworks in Corning, New York, around 1910.

Carder was born in England and worked his way through the ranks of local pottery and glass manufacturers. He finally became a designer for Stevens and Williams of Brierley Hill, one of England's most respected makers of art glass. However, a series of events caused Carder's emigration to this country and in 1903, he helped to found the famous Steuben Glassworks.

A great designer as well as an experimenter, Carder produced some of the most beautiful American colored glass. Pieces like this millefiori plate are rare today because the technical difficulties involved caused limited production.

RENÉ LALIQUE (1860-1945), French.
VASE. Pressed blue glass, polished and acid-finished. About 1915-1918.
Ht. 11 3/8 inches. Signed with acid mark, R. Lalique, France.
Gift of Hugh J. Smith, Jr. 47.8.

Lalique began his distinguished career as a goldsmith and jeweller. He became so well-known in this field that he created jewels for most of the notables and celebrities of the 1890's. However, from 1895, he devoted his attention to the design and production of glass.

The pieces created by Lalique were characterized by fine form and superb finishing. The attention to detail required of Lalique as a goldsmith was simply translated to the field of glassmaking. Lalique revived the technique of pressing, but brought it to a new state of perfection. This vase has been pressed, but its great subtlety is derived from the use of acid-finishing and polishing together. The feathers have been highly polished. The resultant play of light over the surface of the vase creates a design whose ornament is inseparable from its form.

VICTOR DURAND (1870-1931), American.
VASE. Blown, with gold iridescence and Spider Webbing decoration. Between 1924-1931.
Ht. 10 inches. Diameter at lip 5¾ inches.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Levis. 64.139.

The Durand family emigrated from Baccarat, France, and settled in Millville, New Jersey, where young Victor Durand worked in several glasshouses. In 1897, he and his father leased the Vineland Glass Manufacturing Company. This firm soon became an important manufacturer of commercial and scientific glass.

Victor Durand, however, had always wanted to produce a fine art glass. In 1924, he invited several important craftsmen from the defunct Quezal Art Glass and Decorating Company to join him in Vineland to produce art glass. By 1926, Durand Art Glass had been awarded the first prize gold medal at the Sesquicentennial International Exposition in Philadelphia.

This vase is typical of the Durand production in its rich iridescence, classic form, and Spider Webbing decoration, which was a favorite device of Durand and his workers.

JEAN SALA (1895-), French.
BOWL. Blown blue green with white swans in relief. About 1925.
Ht. 5¼ inches. Diameter at rim 7 inches. Signed Jean Sala on bottom.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh J. Smith, Jr. 51.352.

Jean Sala, one of France's foremost glass craftsmen during the early years of this century, was noted for his bold, imaginative designs and careful techniques.

This bowl was formed by the traditional blowing and shaping process. However, its decoration of swans was created by padding. This technique involved applying glass to the surface of a piece which is still hot. The applied glass may then be left as a mass in the surface, carved, or worked into a design. Here, Sala chose to work the applied white glass into simple, bold shapes suggesting swans.

This decorative abstract form predicts the glass of the present day in which the use of the material itself is the most important element in design.

FRANCOIS DÉCORCHEMONT (1885-), French.
BOWL. Mottled green translucent glass. About 1925. Ht. 6⅞ inches; diameter at rim 7⅜ inches. Stamped Decorchemont on side.
Gift of Hugh J. Smith, Jr. 49.1.

Francois Décorchemont was one of the best French glass designers and craftsmen during this period. He was noted for his experiments with various creative techniques, one of the most important of which was pâte de verre or "paste of glass." By this process, fine powdered glass was molded and then fused by heating. The surface was usually cut in the finishing, and the resultant decoration stood out in low relief. Glass of this type had a subtle coloration and a fine translucence.

This bowl is decorated by entwined snakes which flank the head centered on each side. The handles are formed by the undulations of the snakes' bodies. The simple shape of the bowl, rich jade-like surface, and contemporary adaptation of the Medusa legend are characteristic of the taste of the Twenties.

BACCARAT GLASSWORKS, France.
VASE. Blown clear lead glass with carved design of horizontal bands. Between 1930-1935.
Ht. 8⅞ inches. Diameter at rim 5½ inches.
Gift of Hugh J. Smith, Jr. 48.3.

The Baccarat Glassworks are among the oldest and most respected in France. The origins of the firm may be traced back to 1756, but in 1822 it was reorganized as the Compagnie des Cristalleries de Baccarat.

Glass produced by the Baccarat works has always been noted for its high standard of quality. The metal used is of exceptional clarity and brilliance. This fine quality is enhanced by refined, elegant design, as seen in this vase. The boldly executed horizontal bands complement the refractive quality of the glass while also creating such a bold scale that the vase becomes an almost independent sculpture.

The vase is characteristic of the style of the 1930's. Its great elegance derives from the intrinsic properties of the glass. Designers of the period were not interested in mere surface decoration but in the medium of glass for its own sake.

LIBBEY GLASS COMPANY, Toledo, Ohio
PUNCH BOWL AND CUPS. Blown, clear with applied red prunts.
Designed by A. Douglas Nash (1885-1940). Between 1931-1935. Bowl ht. 7¾ inches. Diameter 13⅛ inches. Cup ht. 3 inches. Diameter 2½ inches. Signed with acid-etched Libbey in circle.
Gift of Mrs. Carl R. Megowen in memory of Carl R. Megowen. 68.59.

A. Douglas Nash was one of the most talented American designers of glass during the 1930's. He purchased the Corona, Long Island factory of Louis Comfort Tiffany in 1928 and produced his own glass until 1931. When his own business ceased, Nash was hired by the Libbey Glass Company to design a new line. Glass designed for Libbey was among the most successful produced in this period.

This punch bowl and cups were probably the most ambitious of the designs produced by Nash. The pattern of applied prunts is an adaptation of a Tiffany pattern called "Moravignian." The set was originally made for John H. Wright, vice president of Owens-Illinois, Incorporated, and general manager of the Libbey Division. The set is thought to be unique.

The brilliance and clarity of the glass as well as its chaste form and ornament contribute greatly to the successful presence of the set.

STEUBEN GLASS WORKS, Corning, New York.
GAZELLE BOWL. Blown, clear with engraved design and cut foot. Designed by Sidney Waugh (1904-), American. 1935.
Ht. 7⅜ inches. Diameter at rim 6⅜ inches.
Gift of William E. Levis. 36.36.

In 1933, Arthur A. Houghton revitalized the then moribund Steuben Glass Works with a new and adventuresome concept that America could produce a glass of the highest quality metal and design. Today, the Steuben works produce some of the world's finest glass.

In order to carry out his high ideals of design, Houghton employed the American sculptor, Sidney Waugh, to design his pieces. Waugh, already known for his work in bronze and stone, established a new reputation as a designer of glass.

The Gazelle Bowl was the first of Waugh's engraved designs for the Steuben firm and is one of his most celebrated pieces. The frieze of gazelles is an excellent decorative device to complement the innate beauty of the glass. The solid, weighty cut base acts as an elegant foil to the airiness of the gazelle design.

N. V. NEDERLANDSCHE GLASSFABRIEK LEERDAM, Holland.
BOWL. Blown clear cased glass with mottled pattern. Designed by Andries D. Copier (1901-), Dutch. 1938. Ht. 7 9/16 inches. Diam. at rim 8 inches. Signed Leerdam-Unica, O-505, A. D. Copier.
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 40.40.

Since 1918, the Leerdam glassworks has devoted itself to the manufacture of fine glass after the designs of prominent Dutch and foreign artists. This production of beautifully designed glassware has won many honors at various international expositions and has attracted world-wide attention. Pieces produced by the Leerdam factory are shown in many European and American museums.

This bowl was designed by the Dutch artist A. D. Copier, who has figured prominently in Leerdam's finest designs. Copier calls pieces like this one "Unica" to indicate that the bowl is one of a kind and that its mottled pattern is unique. He has exploited the crystalline quality of the thick glass and foregoes any representational ornament.

The bowl was displayed at the 1939 World's Fair in New York.

KOSTA GLASSWORKS, Kosta, Sweden.
VASE. Blown clear glass, cut. Designed by Elis Bergh (1881-1954), Swedish. 1939.
Ht. $12^{3}/_{5}$ inches. Overall diam. $5^{1}/_{4}$ inches. Signed Kosta, 1939, no. 1492.
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 40.42.

The Kosta Glassworks is one of Sweden's oldest firms and was one of the leaders in the modern renaissance of Swedish glass. The factory's existence may be traced back to 1741, and is today noted for fine practical design, quality metal, and skilled craftsmen.

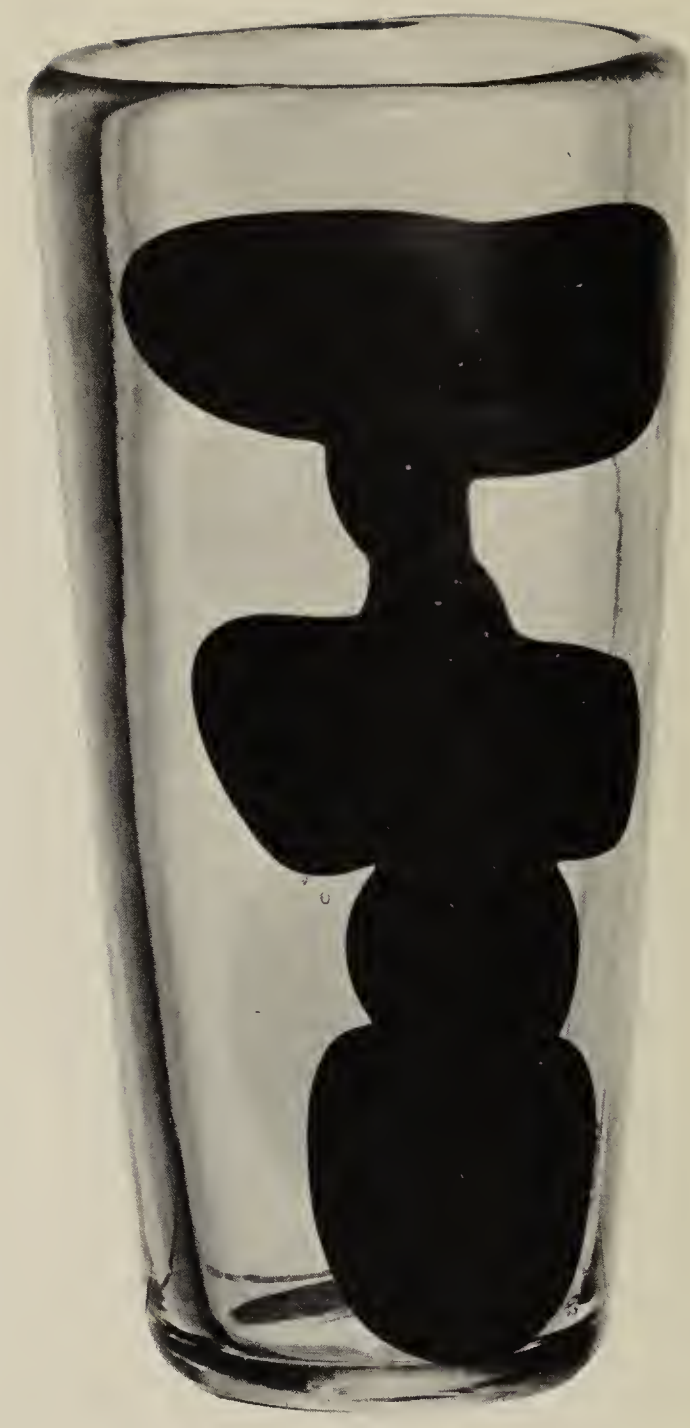
Elis Bergh, designer of this vase, was a Swedish architect with a great interest in other creative fields. He was hired by the Kosta works in 1929 and remained there as a design executive until his death. Like many contemporary Scandinavian designers, Bergh was interested in purity of form, and this was a hallmark of his design. His forms and designs in cut glass were among the best produced in Sweden. The swirling cut design on this vase adds grace and brilliance to the beauty of the heavy lead glass.

Like the Leerdam bowl designed by Andries D. Copier, this vase was exhibited at the 1939 World's Fair in New York.

ORREFORS GLASSWORKS, Sweden.
VASE. Blown "Ariel" type in blue and white. Designed by Edvin Ohrstrom (1906-), Swedish. 1949.
Ht. 6⅞ inches. Diam. at lip 1½ inches. Signed: Orrefors, Sweden, Ariel no. 57 E.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh J. Smith, Jr. 52.133.

The quality of design and the metal itself has been high at the Orrefors works since 1916, when the Swedish Society of Arts and Crafts helped its owner to evolve a fine glasshouse.

Edvin Ohrstrom, the designer of this vase, was already a well-known sculptor when he first joined the Orrefors firm in 1936. He is famous for perfecting glass-turning, which made it possible to create heavy vases and bowls with rounded rims. However, one of his greatest contributions to the design of contemporary glass was his invention of the "Ariel" process. This technique, first introduced at the Paris Exposition of 1937, involved a number of cooling and reheating procedures. During these, bubbles in free-form patterns were blown into the glass. The resultant silvery gleam of air bubbles was a perfect foil for the rich colors and massive forms which were Ohrstrom's hallmarks. As a sculptor who became a glass designer, Ohrstrom particularly exploited the natural sculptural qualities of glass.



PAOLO VENINI (1895-1959), Italian.
VASE. Blown, light yellow with blue and black abstractions. 1950.
Ht. 9⅞ inches. Transverse length at ovoid lip 5 inches.
Signed Venini, Murano, Venezia.
Gift of the Italian Government. 54.49.

The city of Venice dominated the European glass trade from the Renaissance through most of the 18th century. Glassmaking in the city has never really died out and was revived in 1860 by Antonio Salviati (1816-1900).

One of the great innovators of the 20th century, who emerged from the new enthusiasm created by Salviati, was Paolo Venini. Venini combined traditional Venetian craftsmanship with a new design sense. His glass exhibited at the 1925 Paris Exposition won him acclaim as "a promising experimentalist." Later in that year, he established his own glasshouse on the island of Murano, where he produced glass of superior quality and design.

The early designs of Venini reflected the strong contemporary influence of Functionalism, which flourished in Milan in the 1920's and '30's. The chief tenet of this movement was that function alone should determine form. The simple, clean lines of this vase mirror this trend, while its abstract design reflects the organic form and decorative surface of Abstract Expressionism.

FUKUOKA TOKUSHU GARASU, Japan.
BOWL. Blown, multiple layers in brown, yellow, and black. 1953.
Ht. 2 inches. Diameter 6¾ inches.
Museum Purchase. 54.66.

In the 1950's, Japanese glassmaking ceased many of its imitative styles and was profoundly influenced by international contemporary trends. Japanese craftsmen took these new ideas and modes and translated them into a style reflective of new concepts and traditional style. The Industrial Arts Institute began a program to aid glass companies with their designs. The result was a simple glass of good form and color.

The subtle shadings of this layered "Multi" glass are typical of the refinements associated with traditional Japanese art, yet the piece was created in 1953. Japanese glass is still produced with a deep knowledge of the decorative arts of the past. The subtle coloration and simple balanced shape of this bowl are reflections of an older Japanese art.

HARVEY K. LITTLETON (1922-), American.
VASE. Free blown, opaque copper-schmelz. 1966.
Ht. 6½ inches. Diameter 5½ inches. Signed Harvey K. Littleton, 1966.
Museum Purchase. 66.133.

The United States has been responsible for one of the most important movements in contemporary glass craftsmanship. This trend began in the 1960's and has been carried out by a group of artists who work their own glass. In this way, the designer and blowers are the same person, an exciting development in the field.

The movement was initiated in 1962 with an important seminar organized by The Toledo Museum of Art. The Museum was able to bring interested glass craftsmen together, and the resultant experimentation led to a renaissance in contemporary handwork glass.

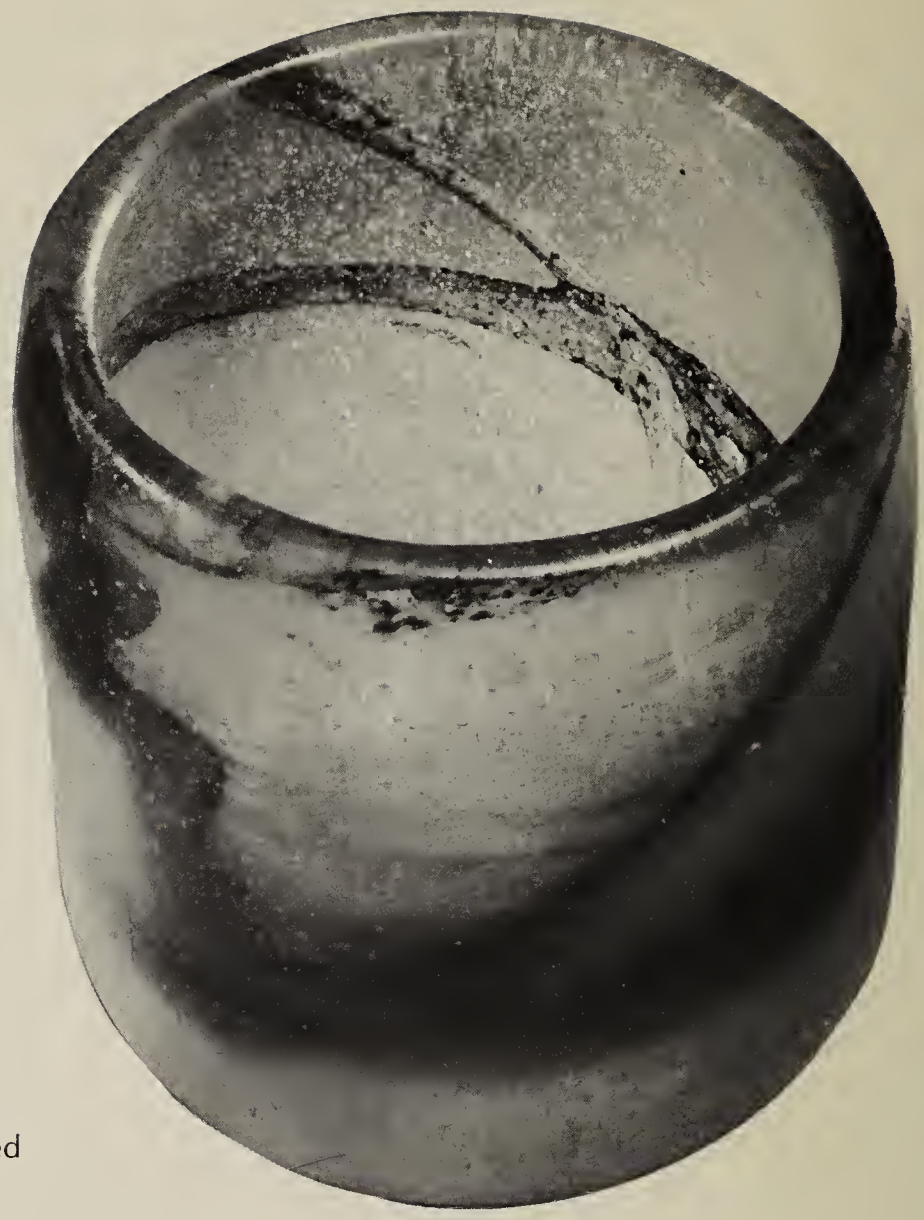
It was Harvey K. Littleton, a former instructor in ceramics at The Toledo Museum who first proposed the concept of a Toledo seminar on glass as an expressive medium. With the expertise of men like Littleton and Dominick Labino, the first Toledo seminar established that glass could be blown and worked in an individual studio. As a result of this, and subsequent Toledo seminars, some fifteen courses, in glass craftsmanship are now being taught in America and England. Professor Littleton now teaches at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

The free, graceful form and decoration of this piece indicate the highly developed skills of the designer, while its beautifully finished surface is a comment upon Littleton's ability as a craftsman.

DOMINICK LABINO (1910-), American.
"Objects in Space." Free-blown, amber and green with trapped bubbles. 1966.
Ht. 3¾ inches. Diam. 4 inches. Signed Dominick Labino, 1966.
Museum Purchase. 66.131.

Dominick Labino is a pioneer in the development of contemporary handcrafted glass, and together with Littleton developed the first Toledo glass seminar in 1962. He designed the furnace and furnished the glass for the first experiments at The Toledo Museum of Art, which are considered to be a milestone in this trend. Today, Labino is one of the ranking creative glassworkers in this country. In the years since the initial seminars in Toledo, he has won national acclaim, influenced other noted glass craftsmen, and has aided in the establishment of glass-blowing classes at numerous universities. He is also the Honorary Curator of Glass at The Toledo Museum of Art.

As former vice president for research at the Johns-Manville Fiber Glass Corporation, Labino is interested in experimentation. He continues his research at his studio in Grand Rapids, Ohio. Toledo Museum seminars, using the Labino studio and the collections of the Museum have been held since 1966 and have led to important experimentation. Color and its influence upon form are two focal points of his work which can be readily seen in "Objects in Space." Labino's great technical skill is evident in the quality of the metal and its beautifully finished surface.



ERWIN EISCH (1927-), German.
VASE. Blown, yellow with brown and black, fumed iridescence. November 29, 1967.
Ht. 4 inches. Diameter 4 3/16 inches. Signed Eisch '67.
Museum Purchase. 68.85.

Erwin Eisch is the son of a glass engraver and is the chief designer for his family's glass factory in Frauenau, Bavaria. He has studied industrial design, sculpture, and painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich and is today an active experimenter in the field of glass craftsmanship. He is an important European figure in the renaissance of glass design and blowing.

Eisch has said of glass that he would prefer "to consider it as an element which might harbor a whole world of poetical possibilities." He has been outspoken in his disagreement with the European tradition of a studio designer drawing designs for the glass-blower to reproduce. His feeling is strong that "the artist must hold and feel the moving form in the hot glass." (Craft Horizons, May-June 1963)

The carefully modulated color and surface of this vase are tangible reflections of the craftsman's views on glass as a distinct medium of expression.

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